

# ONE FAMILY

# UNDER GOD

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A STATEMENT

*of the*

U.S. BISHOPS' COMMITTEE  
on MIGRATION

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*Endorsed by the Administrative Committee  
of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops*

*Revised Edition*

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# ONE FAMILY UNDER GOD

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*"The mission that Christ came to realize  
among men consists in 'gather[ing] together  
into one the scattered children of God' (Jn 11:52)."*

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**A**s we approach the third millennium marking the birth of Jesus Christ, it is clear that we live in a time of tremendous change. One of the "signs of the times" is the universality and visibility of human mobility. This is especially true because the nature of the phenomenon has changed significantly in the last decade. The migration stream has diversified: it includes not only persons from third world nations, but individuals from the former Soviet bloc as well. The stream has also dispersed, and now in addition to the customary receiving countries—the United States, Canada, and Australia—migrants are traveling to the nations of Western Europe (including previous sending countries like Italy), Japan, and other wealthy nations of Asia.

Globalization characterizes our era. For the first time in history, capital can flow freely across the world, even into and out of communist countries like China and Vietnam. Multinational corporations now wield more power than some states. Advances in communications technology such as the Internet, the ease of travel, the pervasive influence of Western culture, and the increased urban nature of the world's population mean that we live in a bustling global "mega-city."

Presumably the elimination of many of the barriers—economic, political, and social—that have kept the world in separate blocs should lead to a freer movement of peoples. More than 100 million people

(refugees, immigrants, and migrants) are on the move. These migrants are a small proportion of the world's population, but they can be perceived as putting great pressure on the state system. As rich nations have begun to feel that the situation has gotten out of control, they have reacted with punitive and restrictive policies. Many poor nations, feeling the same threats, have initiated anti-immigrant measures. On every continent, there have been reports of violence against migrants.

The acrimony and hostility that has become a part of the immigration debate in so many countries has permeated the discussion of newcomers and their contributions to the United States as well. The public debate about who should be provided a means of coming to this country as a refugee or immigrant and how to establish an appropriate process to regulate entry is entirely legitimate. Because such a topic has such serious implications for determining the future of this nation, it must be examined in a clearheaded and conscientious manner. In an effort to elevate the debate and raise some of the moral issues involved in this conversation, the Committee on Migration offers the insights of Catholic social teaching as a springboard for further discussion.

## *Special Relevance of Christian Tradition to Issues of Human Migration*

**T**he Judeo-Christian tradition is steeped in images of migration. The story of Adam and Eve's exile from the Garden of Eden is the first of many stories of uprootedness and migration in the Old Testament. The wandering of Abraham, our first father in faith, sets the precedent. The chosen people were being led by God to a new homeland. At the core of the ancient Israelite experience is the exodus from Egypt—the central image of a people in motion being led by God through Moses. Yet, even in the promised homeland, a great exile and eventually the diaspora are visited upon the ancient Hebrews.

The New Testament begins with a story of movement—Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem where Christ is born. Soon thereafter, the Holy Family flees to Egypt to escape the persecution of male infants. Christ's adult ministry was itself itinerant, but even as he became known throughout the region, he was rejected in his own town of Nazareth.

The Mosaic law and Hebrew Scriptures reflect the experience of a people uprooted and a sensitivity to the plight of foreigners in frequent injunctions to welcome the stranger. This is first articulated in Exodus and is reiterated throughout the Old Testament. Leviticus states:

When an alien resides with you in your land, do not molest him. You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; have the same love for him as for yourself; for you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt. I, the Lord, am your God (Lv 19:33-34).

The Old Testament equates the plight of the alien or stranger with the previous experience of the People of God. In the New Testament, the injunction is somewhat different. Christ says, “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me . . .” (Mt 25:35). The New Testament shifts from identifying with strangers based on a common experience to serving strangers because in each face we see Christ.

The journeying imagery that so permeates the Old and New Testaments resonated strongly with the early Church. The view of human life itself as a journey is evident in Christianity’s first title, “The Way.” The rapid growth of the early Church was in large measure due to the considerable freedom of movement within the Roman Empire. As a result, the work of the apostles and of Paul in particular was characterized by constant travel to spread the word of God, punctuated by persecution for their religious beliefs. The broadening of Christianity to include the gentiles was inaugurated by St. Peter, who said, “. . . in truth, I see that God shows no partiality. Rather in every nation, whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him” (Acts 10:34-35). The expansion of the Christian family marks the shift in the early Church to an emphasis on the universality of Christianity. Through the Pentecost, God “gathers into one the dispersed children of God” (Jn 11:52), focusing the efforts of the Church on building unity among human beings.

Ultimately, Revelation 7:1-12 pictures the eschatological procession for all human persons to the heavenly kingdom. This imagery is in fact mirrored in *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World): “United in Christ, they are led by the Holy Spirit

in their journey to the kingdom of their Father and they have welcomed the news of salvation which is meant for every man" (§1).

The development of a Christian self-understanding was an important task for the early Church fathers. The idea that a Christian belongs to a world beyond the temporal is a consistent thread in early Church teaching. Augustine was expanding on an established tradition when he referred to Christians as *peregrini*, a word we might define as registered aliens, strangers in this life always longing for their true home. The citizen who is also a Christian cannot be fully absorbed in the political society. This Christian consciousness of being an "alien" in this life which is not our "homeland" has led the theologians of the Church to try over the centuries to clarify the relationship between the human person and the state. Much of this theological reflection took place during the Middle Ages before the rise of the modern nation-state in Europe. The great principles of Catholic social teaching—subsidiarity, the dignity of the human person, the common good, solidarity, just war theory—are products of centuries of reflection. The fundamental principles on which social situations, structures, and systems are to be judged are the double criteria for analysis: solidarity and subsidiarity.<sup>2</sup> It was this collective thinking that began to crystallize in Pope Leo XIII's encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*.

Written in 1891, *Rerum Novarum* ("On the Condition of Labor") was partially a response to the great European migration to the United States. This first encyclical to comment on social issues articulated the principles of private property and the dignity of human labor, with an indirect corollary being the right to migrate to sustain one's family. Subsequent documents, such as Pope Pius XI's encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* ("After Forty Years"), affirmed and expanded on the right to migrate. Pope Pius XII responded to the unprecedented populations of refugees and displaced persons following World War II by issuing the encyclical *Exsul Familia* ("The Emigre Family"), which begins:

The émigré Holy Family of Nazareth, fleeing into Egypt, is the archetype of every refugee family. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, living in exile in Egypt to escape the fury of an evil king, are, for all times and places, the models and protectors of every migrant,

alien and refugee of whatever kind who, whether compelled by fear of persecution or by want, is forced to leave his native land, his beloved parents and relatives, his close friends and to seek a foreign soil.<sup>3</sup>

*Exsul Familia* proceeds to outline the Church's commitment to "pilgrims, aliens, exiles, and migrants of every kind" beginning with the work of St. Ambrose to ransom captives and continuing through the Church's ministry to migrants and exiles during and immediately after the war. Pope Pius XII reiterates the right to migrate and stresses the conditions necessary to a successful migration experience:

If the two parties, those who agree to leave their native land and those who agree to admit the newcomers, remain anxious to eliminate as far as possible all obstacles to the birth and growth of real confidence between the country of emigration and that of immigration, all those affected by such transference of people and places will profit by the transaction.<sup>4</sup>

While the Church recognizes the right of nations to control their borders, in 1969, the Sacred Congregation for Bishops stated that "public authorities unjustly deny the rights of human persons if they block or impede emigration except where grave requirements of the common good, considered objectively, demand it." Thus, the Church speaks to the moral and ethical norms that should govern international migration while states are principally concerned with national interest and security issues.<sup>5</sup>

Migration and the common good have also been concerns of Pope John Paul II. In *Laborem Exercens* ("On Human Work"), the Holy Father states:

Once more the fundamental principles must be repeated: the hierarchy of values and the profound meaning of work itself require that capital should be at the service of labor and not labor at the service of capital.<sup>6</sup>

In a world in which goods often move more freely than people, the pope underscores the preeminence of human resources.

In the subsequent encyclical, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* ("On Social Concern"), the pope delineates "authentic human development" from the Christian perspective. If the necessary conditions to foster authentic human development are present in a given country, the need to migrate is obviated by the opportunity for persons to realize their full potential and live in dignity in their homelands. One cause of human migration is the unequal distribution of the gifts of creation and the structures that have arisen to protect those who have received the bounty of those gifts from those who covet the gifts that others have received. International cooperation and solidarity are necessary if the problem is to be addressed in such a way as to correctly balance the scales. In the interim, the encyclical calls for a realization of a civilization of work allowing all persons to realize the basic human right to work. If this right cannot be exercised in one's homeland, then "Interdependence must be transformed into *solidarity* based upon the principle that the goods of creation are meant for all."<sup>7</sup> Any limitation on international migration must be undertaken only after careful consideration of the demands of international solidarity. These considerations include development assistance, trade and investment programs, education and training, and more even distribution policies designed to narrow the wide gaps between rich and poor.

One hundred years after *Rerum Novarum* addressed the social questions of the day (industrialization and problems of labor and capital and, indirectly, the problem of migration in search of work), in *Centesimus Annus* ("After 100 Years"), Pope John Paul II addressed the responsibility of the state to oversee the exercise of human rights in the economic sector—especially the right to work and social assistance. In section 48, we find an admonition regarding the condition of refugees and immigrants: "It should be added that certain kinds of demands often call for a response which is not simply material, but which is capable of perceiving the deeper human need." The need is for solidarity and for the realization that "no one can say that he is not responsible for the well-being of his brother or sister."<sup>8</sup>

*Pastoral Statements of the  
Catholic Bishops of the United States*

The experience of the Church in the United States has provided the U.S. bishops with a special sensitivity to the newcomers in our midst. Possibly no other institution in American life has had as much experience dealing with the integration of newcomers as the Catholic Church, especially through her parishes and schools. In 1976, the bishops were clear in their affirmation of the Church's solicitude for newcomers.

The Church, the People of God, is required by the Gospel and by its long tradition to promote and defend the human rights and dignity of people on the move, to advocate social remedies to their problems and to foster opportunities for their spiritual and religious growth.<sup>9</sup>

A later pastoral letter, "Cultural Pluralism in the United States," illustrates some of the lessons learned by the immigrant Church in this country. Inherent in the dynamic process of migration is change, and an intrinsic part of change is resistance and tension. The pastoral observes:

The earlier population, long the only residents of the area, now find people of new and different cultures moving in with them. . . . This ebb and flow must be of particular concern to the Church. The long story of change . . . drifts in and out of our national consciousness, but the large picture and its implications for our citizens rarely receives the full study that can draw from it the rich lessons it affords to our contemporary society.<sup>10</sup>

Not only is there tension between old and new, but rivalries also form across ethnic groups "for economic opportunity, for neighborhood space, and for political power [which] has contributed to separation and misunderstanding. . . . Other elements . . . rested directly on language, folkways, and cultural patterns."<sup>11</sup>

The immigrant tradition of this nation has meant that the Catholic Church in the United States is a microcosm of the universal Church. The statement notes that "the religious traditions of many lands took

firm root in the immigrant scene and made a true Pentecost of the growing Church.”<sup>12</sup> At the turn of the century, “national” parishes served as the centers of Catholic faith and community for various ethnic groups and were instrumental in easing the acculturation of newcomers to American life.

The challenges of nurturing a multiethnic and multiple-tradition Church have in some ways mirrored the challenges facing the nation.

The longtime rivalries among groups of Catholics of different ethnic traditions were often seen in terms of an ecclesiastical power struggle in the appointment of members of the hierarchy. . . . Today the issue remains, although in milder form, as many ethnic groups feel the need of better representation in the Church leadership.<sup>13</sup>

Yet throughout both the Church’s and the nation’s experience, time has affirmed the contributions of each successive immigrant group. Though initially derided for their strangeness and incompatibility with the traditions of this nation, they have proven valuable far beyond what could have been expected, leading the NCCB to conclude that

the mingling of cultures, which sometimes created tensions, also brought positive elements of enduring value to the family, the Church, and the country itself. . . . Any move to suppress or even neglect this resource would make our total nation poorer.<sup>14</sup>

Most recently, the Church’s concern for the undocumented is stated clearly in the pastoral, *Together a New People*, which pointedly states:

 In the dynamic process of creating community with all, the Church favors the most needy, and among these are migrants, refugees, and culturally different groups. . . . It is against the common good and unacceptable to have a double society, one visible with rights and one invisible without rights—a voiceless underground of undocumented persons.<sup>15</sup>

Yet, the Church is also aware that there is a concomitant responsibility for newcomers to "exercise the rights and duties of citizens to build community and nation."<sup>16</sup>

## *The Policy Agenda*

**A**s we, the NCCB Committee on Migration, have worked to direct the pastoral, service, and policy responses of our national agencies to refugees, immigrants, migrants, and other newcomers on behalf of our brother bishops, we have observed that throughout much of the current debate there has been a tendency to discuss processes and persons as if they are interchangeable or, indeed, as if the people are secondary to the process. Since the teaching and experience of the Church is centered on promoting "development of peoples"<sup>17</sup> in the context of the common good, the committee offers some observations and principles that should serve to illuminate the debate as well as guide policy makers.

We see two types of policy at play in the current public debate on immigration issues. The first is *immigrant* policy: that is, policy that addresses the needs and concerns of persons either already here in the United States or those desiring to come here. The second involves *immigration* policy: the implementation of those policies that facilitate entry through the adjudication of asylum and refugee claims, the appropriate exercise of the nation's right to control its borders, the orderly processing of visas, etc.

### *Immigrant Policy*

**I**mmigrant policy should be designed to enhance and affirm the basic protection of human dignity. The primary aspects are as follows:

- Persons fleeing persecution or other refugee-like situations have a special moral standing and thus require special consideration.
- Workers have the right to work and live without exploitation.

- Family reunification remains the appropriate basis for just immigration policy.
- Every effort should be made to encourage and enable highly skilled and educated persons to remain in or return to their homelands.
- Efforts to stem migration that do not effectively address its root causes are not only ineffectual, but permit the continuation of the political, social, and economic inequities that cause it.

**■ Persons fleeing persecution or other refugee-like situations require special consideration.** Of those displaced in the world today, some 20 million are refugees fleeing persecution, torture, rape, genocide, forced abortion, and political violence. These persons, who cannot remain in their homelands for fear of the consequences, are often severely traumatized. Some are able to find relief in nearby countries, but for many, regional solutions are not the answer. By the time they reach the relative safety of a refugee camp or U.S. port of entry, they have exhausted themselves and their alternatives. It is important that the processes designed to enable their claims to refugee status take into account the tremendous stress that refugees face. The trauma of their experiences and flight are often accentuated by worries about possible threats to family members left behind. While it is important for refugees and asylees to strive for early employment, there is often, understandably, some need for transitional assistance.

**■ Workers have the right to work and live without exploitation.** All workers within a society deserve the right to an honest wage, to fair treatment by employers, and to full participation in the labor market, which includes the right to organize for collective bargaining. This concern has a particular resonance for immigrant and minority workers who have traditionally suffered ill-treatment with limited opportunities for relief. While this represents larger justice issues that have long plagued this nation, it also has an important resonance in the immigration debate. Temporary labor programs that rely on migrant workers have not had a good history in the United States and continue to spawn abusive situations. We reiterate a concern most recently expressed in

1988 that "temporary foreign labor programs should be gradually eliminated."<sup>18</sup> Every effort should be made to avoid recreating large-scale "Guestworker" programs. Temporary worker categories that are necessary ought to offer full labor market rights, and temporary workers should be accorded health and disability benefits as a means of promoting their human dignity.

We must face squarely the extent to which the presence of persons in illegal status in this country is directly related to our own willingness to use and dispose the labors of these people how, when, and where it suits us. U.S. employers who hire aliens who have entered the United States illegally are no less obligated to treat their employees fairly. The sting of illegal status is the powerlessness of the individual in the face of unscrupulous employers determined to squeeze as much work out of the worker for as little money as possible. Often, illegal workers are exposed to serious health risks, live in squalid housing, are denied pay for work completed, and are subjected to threats and intimidation. It is our complicity in their exploitation that makes efforts to punish them for their presence in this land particularly duplicitous and self-serving.

**■ Family reunification remains the appropriate basis for just immigration policy.** The family unit is the basic building block of any society. In the United States, the family is under siege at all levels. The crisis in the nuclear family has placed more children in poverty than at any other point in U.S. history. Yet, part of the disintegration of the nuclear family itself lies in the loosening of bonds between wider family units. Where extended families have previously provided a cushion enabling nuclear families to weather difficult times, those supports have often been eroded. At the same time, many immigrant groups represent cultures which place a premium on family ties and in which the contributions of all family members—young and old—are integral to the social and economic stability of society. It is important that, as a nation, we recognize the importance of affirming family within the immigration context as a means of not only affirming the family in the United States in general, but as a means of providing buffers for immigrants who seek to acclimate to this society.

Migration of any type is a risky venture, and frequently immediate family members remain in the home country while the original

immigrant becomes established in the work force. When the initial immigrant is well enough established, he or she is able to assist subsequent family members in their transition to the U.S. society and work force. As a result, the family system enables workers to come to the United States and rely on other family members and not the government to serve as mediating influence. This has been a characteristic of the migration stream to the United States since our earliest history. It is critical to the success of this process and to the health of our communities that immigrant families not be unduly stressed by a prolonged time line for the reunification of close family members, particularly spouses and minor children.

It is also important that government policies towards immigrants already living in the United States not ignore the personal investments that immigrant families make in this country. Those here lawfully or who have worked and paid taxes in the United States for a substantial period should have the benefit of a safety net. Debilitating traffic accidents, on-the-job injuries, and other unforeseen events occur to persons regardless of immigration status. Barring immigrants from forms of relief available to similarly placed citizens denies the basic rights of newcomers and marginalizes them at a time when they are in greatest need. It is especially important that policies not force families to decide between impoverishment and watching a family member suffer if medical care is sought.

Special consideration should be given to the needs of children. It is unacceptable and arguably contrary to the norms of American society to use or punish children deliberately as a means of penalizing their parents. In this context we are particularly concerned about the children of undocumented immigrants who are frequently in the United States through no choice of their own. Efforts to deny public education, public health, and other basic protections to these children are mean-spirited and ultimately short-sighted, since the well-being of the whole community is affected by the well-being of *all* of its children.

**■ Every effort should be made to encourage highly skilled and educated persons to remain in or return to their homelands.** While Catholic social teaching is not averse to labor migration in general, it is clearly in opposition to policies that explicitly and intentionally tap the third world's reservoir of trained, educated individuals in pursuit of

selfish interests. For a small developing country, each of these individuals is acutely valuable and, ultimately, irreplaceable. Efforts should be made instead to foster the kinds of environments that assist less-developed countries in retaining and revitalizing those best positioned to provide the kind of skills and leadership that many of these nations so sorely need.

■ **Efforts to stem migration that do not effectively address its root causes are not only ineffectual, but permit the continuation of the political, social, and economic inequities that cause it.** It is important that the root causes of migration be addressed in a systematic manner. The United States is striving to address the causes of migration (albeit not to its full potential), but it cannot do so without the support and assistance of other countries. The forces that propel persons into the migration stream are many. The most intractable are those based on economic and political motivations. Economic factors that must be rectified include lack of economic opportunity in many third world nations, the vast gulf between rich and poor, an overall lack of financial resources, and national debt. Political persecution, repression, and violence also force the decision to migrate. Frequently, political and economic forces are so intertwined that it becomes difficult—and indeed specious—to attempt to distinguish which is the prime motivator.

Resolving migration “push” factors by addressing only one aspect of their manifestation in a particular nation or region is destined to be unsuccessful and indeed may worsen the situation. The full array of problems must be confronted in a strategy that links development projects with other economic and political realities.

## *Immigration Policy*

**I**t is vitally important that the processes and procedures governing the orderly entry of refugees, legal immigrants, and visitors and the deterrence of illegal immigration be transparent, fair, and generous. Part of protecting and affirming orderly migration to the United States lies in devising a system that can be understood and navigated by those it is designed to serve. This is particularly true for the refugee and asylum programs that offer relief to persons fleeing life-threatening situa-

tions. All Americans, regardless of whether they ever encounter a refugee or asylum-seeker or use the immigration system to reunite with family members, should be able to understand its contours and requirements. In addition, it is important that the ways in which a policy is implemented serve and be proportionate to its goals. For example, the goal of political asylum is to offer eligible persons the opportunity to obtain refuge in the United States from the persecution experienced in their home countries. Efforts to devise a process that limits the submission of frivolous claims are legitimate, but not if the means for deterring unfounded applications also denies access to those with genuine claims. We offer the following comments on some of the practical, administrative, and processing issues under discussion today.

- **BORDER ENFORCEMENT:** Catholic social teaching recognizes not merely the right but the responsibility of states to control their borders. Adequate funding and training for the border patrol functions of the Immigration and Naturalization Service is critical. Our concerns revolve around means to that end. The critical question inherent in this process is whether border enforcement is done in such a way that the human dignity of those involved (border patrol agents as well as those attempting to cross the border) is respected and enhanced. We support efforts to make the border patrol more sensitive to the human rights of those undocumented aliens it encounters through the use of independent monitoring mechanisms. Yet it is also crucial that there be a sensitivity to the local community which is often inextricably tied—through family relationships, cultural similarities, and economic relationships—to communities on the other sides of our land borders.
- **EXCLUSION AND DEPORTATION:** Persons in deportation and exclusion proceedings should be afforded adequate due process to ensure that claims to political asylum may be justly addressed. Unaccompanied minors in the exclusion or deportation proceedings should be treated with special sensitivity.

Final orders of removal should result in the actual removal of individuals deemed to no longer have legitimate claims to remain in the United States. One of the greatest failures of U.S. enforcement policy has been the incapacity of the government to actually bring

about the departure of those who have been ordered deported or removed. A result of this breakdown in process has been the proposal and often implementation of a myriad of measures designed to protect the system either by keeping people from gaining access to the asylum process or by incarcerating persons upon arrival. A simpler response would be to fashion deportation and exclusion policy that will actually result in its intended aims.

- **DETENTION:** Detention has become a poor substitute for a policy of effective removal. Alternatives to detention should be explored where possible. Long-term detention of unaccompanied minors should be avoided. Individuals who are not criminals and who are unlikely to abscond should also have other options. In instances in which aliens are detained, the conditions of confinement should be humane. Non-criminal aliens should be protected from criminal inmates and should have access to medical care and legal representation.
- **POLITICAL ASYLUM:** While we have been troubled about the proliferation of frivolous political asylum cases, we are concerned that the means used to deter such claims lie in the denial of work authorization. This approach relies on a prompt adjudication of cases that frequently require careful scrutiny. As long as the new asylum system can keep pace with new claims, the hardship posed for the applicant is at least somewhat mitigated. We would, however, decry the backlog and urge that resources be devoted to adjudication so that those still waiting for an answer to their years-old claims may get some closure.

The question of proportionality is an important one in the asylum process. Efforts to curb the use of the fraudulent documents that enable frivolous claims are legitimate; however, it is important not to dismiss out of hand persons who present such documents. Persons fleeing persecution—particularly government-sanctioned persecution—are in an extremely difficult position when it comes to obtaining documents from those same governments. Requiring them to do so presents an almost existential situation in which no

matter what choice the person makes, he must return (or be returned) to his tormentors.

Political asylum must remain a real option. Appropriate due process protections, a user-friendly system, and access to legal representation are important variables in maintaining a healthy system. Above all, while we support the concept of in-country processing for refugee status, it should at no point be the only means by which persons are allowed to escape from oppressive regimes, and it is on no occasion the only appropriate alternative to allowing access to the political asylum system.

- **FAMILY PREFERENCE SYSTEM:** We believe that in the main, the family preference system appropriately affirms values important to this nation and provides the types of immigrants that benefit this nation. There are, however, serious backlogs in the preference system, particularly in the preference offering reunification to adult sons and daughters of U.S. citizens and spouses and children of U.S. permanent resident aliens. We support efforts to facilitate more timely reunification of these categories. It is also clear that the backlog in the fourth preference providing U.S. citizens with the right to reunify with their adult brothers and sisters is out of control and in need of serious scrutiny.
- **EMPLOYMENT VERIFICATION:** In the “Policy Statement on Employer Sanctions,”<sup>19</sup> the NCCB delineates opposition to employer sanctions, concluding that “far from eliminating this easily exploited group of people, [sanctions penalizing employers for hiring undocumented aliens] has driven them deeper into the underground of our society.” Employment verification systems, regardless of whether they are referred to simply as databases or as identification cards, not only have the potential for driving the undocumented further underground, but will clearly do so at a far greater social and economic cost to the society as a whole.
- **REFUGEE POLICY:** Refugees have a special moral claim to sympathy and assistance since they flee violence and persecution that could cost them their lives. Over the years, the United States has

been generous in opening its doors to refugees and has played a lead role globally in issues relating to refugee protection. This country's current refugee program reflects that tradition. It has served the United States well and has been the source of relief for thousands of refugees. Recent efforts which aim to significantly cut back the traditional American commitment to refugees—like the proposal to cap refugee admissions for resettlement numerically, the newly announced policy of involuntary return of Cubans intercepted on the high seas, and the repatriation of Haitian children to questionable circumstances—are disturbing. We urge that restrictionist measures aimed at limiting the American response to refugees be avoided and that the United States work to encourage a continued open and flexible response to the needs of refugees by the international community. It is vital that the traditional spirit of generous compassion remain the hallmark of this country's refugee policy.

It is also essential for the United States to continue to lead the effort to provide relief and assistance to refugees and displaced persons. Tragically, the repeated massive migration emergencies of recent years are likely to continue to erupt from the current unstable world order. While working to build a more stable world, the United States must lead the drive to alleviate the misery of those affected by such crises.

- **STATUS VERIFICATION BY PRIVATE ENTITIES:** Efforts to enlist private charities in verifying the immigration status of the recipients of federally funded assistance are a serious challenge to private charitable providers. This effort is antithetical to the moral norms guiding charitable efforts, which are based on a commitment to alleviating poverty and suffering for any in need. Moreover, most people working in private charities—many of whom are volunteers—do not have the necessary knowledge to verify documentation, and the bureaucratic structure that such a process would entail (for the charities and the government) would drain funds that should more appropriately be used to provide services.

## *Immigrant and African American Communities*

Questions have arisen about the impact of immigrants on the employment prospects of native-born poor, particularly African American poor. There are concerns that where a specific ethnic group dominates an unskilled sector of the local economy, African Americans are not so much displaced as excluded. Scholars generally agree that the effect of immigration in the aggregate is most likely negligible, while at the individual level there are instances of displacement. It is clear, however, that friction exists in some areas between certain immigrant and African American communities.

This conflict tends to pit the poor against the poor, which deflects attention from the wider systemic dysfunctions in this country. By design or by inertia, these failures of our social system perpetrate the legacy of slavery and racism. The question is not why African Americans are not holding a greater percentage of the jobs in the fast food industry but, rather, why African Americans are not holding a greater percentage of the jobs in Silicon Valley. The real issue is the failure of this nation to offer adequate training, education, and support to minority poor so that they may take their places not at the bottom of the employment ladder, but among the best of the highly skilled and educated workers at the top. This is especially true at a time when so many highly skilled and well-educated immigrants, whose contributions are so desperately needed in their homelands, are lured to the United States by high-paying jobs.

While it is often the anger that flares up between communities that receives media attention, there are actually many instances of cooperation between African American and immigrant communities. Many urban areas boast of cooperative projects involving one or more immigrant community and the local African American community for which people work together for such diverse goals as affordable housing, credit unions, the provision of educational opportunities, and advocacy efforts to improve neighborhoods and quality of life.<sup>20</sup>

The Church is in the position to help nurture cooperation and reconciliation in many places throughout the country. Inner-city Catholic schools generally draw their students from poor immigrant and African

American communities. One of the goals of Catholic education is to facilitate the integration of the newly arrived ethnic and cultural groups into the wider society and the Church, while respecting their individual cultural and religious heritage. Schools and religious education centers, in trying to implement this goal, set themselves a twofold task of educating students (and their parents) to assume leadership roles in society and to become personally involved in service to the community. Acknowledging that there is no single model or means of education that is appropriate to the needs and desires of all persons, we believe not only that parents have the right to choose the kind of education best suited to the needs of their children, but that financial assistance necessary to exercise that choice should not be a barrier. Through our approximately 25,000 Catholic schools and religious education centers, we remain committed to the continuance of these educational efforts that will prepare individuals who not only will be contributing members of society, but who will also foster in their communities a mutual appreciation of the gifts and talents of all members of the community.

## *A Challenge to Leadership*

The new communities of Catholics that exist throughout this nation are vital resources and strengths to be integrated fully into the Catholic Church in the United States. The challenge to affirm and serve these groups is felt very strongly by the Catholic bishops of the United States, although often our ability to address the needs of these populations has not kept pace with their growth and diversification. This gap between need and capacity has often left many Catholic newcomers feeling adrift and unwelcome by a Church they often find unfamiliar. We must renew our efforts not only to reach out to these people on a spiritual level, but to assist them in the process of making their way in their new country.

Fortunately, there are many dioceses that have initiated innovative programs designed to address the full range of needs that newcomers, be they Catholic or not, bring to the Church. The Archdiocese of Newark has redesigned its ministry to newcomers and will house diocesan staff in parishes in a shift to a more intensive parish-based model of ministry. In Boston, ethnic centers for Cambodian, Chinese, and

Laotian newcomers—in addition to supporting catechists and providing traditional pastoral services—offer English as a second language classes, courses designed specifically to help women immigrants acclimate to U.S. life, and assistance in navigating government bureaucracies. The Archdiocese of Washington offers a health care network composed of clinics and medical personnel who provide *pro bono* medical care to the poor. Pre- and postnatal programs, used overwhelmingly by immigrants, are offered by the archdiocese in conjunction with three local Catholic hospitals. The Diocese of Brooklyn runs a competitive vocational training program that provides graduates with internships and job referrals.

Creative approaches to assisting immigrants in the acculturation process at the local level are vital aspects of the Church's larger mission to minister to newcomers in the United States. More challenging for the Church is the work of welcoming these faithful into the community of the Catholic Church. This effort has historically focused on providing worship opportunities that reflect the religious experience of the homeland. In place of the national parishes which flourished during the previous major influxes of immigrants to the United States, national pastoral centers for Cambodians, Chinese, Ethiopians, Filipinos, Haitians, Hmong, Korean, Laotians, and Vietnamese have been established in key areas where the newer immigrants have settled. These centers, along with diocesan offices for ethnic apostolates, embark on such efforts as the development of culturally appropriate materials for liturgical celebrations, the circulation of ethnic newsletters and bulletins containing useful information and cultural opportunities, the development of catechetical materials for use with children and adults that are in accord with their faith expression, and the provision of Mass in the native language.

We must acknowledge, however, the need to do more. The Church's commitment to newcomers, especially those who are poor, remains at the heart of its mission as we approach the millennium. Our commitment to this population must be evidenced in action on its behalf and service to its needs. Perhaps one of the most important aspects of providing pastoral care lies in the development of pastoral agents—lay persons, religious, and priests—indigenous to each community whether

at the parish, pastoral center, or diocesan level. This includes the provision of appropriate orientation and education for foreign-born priests and religious personnel preparing to serve immigrant communities and the identification and development of lay leadership and vocations within these communities. It is especially opportune to consider the work of permanent deacons in these communities. Finally, it is important that in nurturing these Catholic communities, we commit to providing a role and voice for them within the Church in this country.

The process of acclimation to the wider American community provides an opportunity for the Church to revitalize its traditional role as the familiar home from which newcomers prepare to step out into the unfamiliar nation. We encourage parishes to initiate English language classes or tutoring for local newcomer groups and to assist in and encourage the process of naturalization so that those who are eligible may become fully participating members of this society. Catholic schools, which already play an important role in some areas in educating immigrant children, can be used more broadly to provide educational opportunities (after-school classes, etc.) for adults and children.

In providing services to newcomers, local Catholic Charities agencies, which have long provided significant services to newcomers, must face the challenge of welcoming the stranger in what has unfortunately become an increasingly hostile world. Catholic hospitals, often significant sources of medical care for immigrants, must continue to strive to provide quality care to immigrants, especially if alternative options shrink or disappear. Finally, the many dioceses that provide immigration services to newcomers serve a vital function. The Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc., must continue to seek creative ways to assist diocesan programs in the provision of services and in the provision of *pro bono* legal services to persons in detention.

## *Long-Term Approach for U.S. Policy*

Over the long term, it is important that the political leadership in this country commit to solutions that will enhance unity in the U.S. The survivability of this nation through the next century depends in no small degree on the rejuvenation of good citizenship for all U.S. citizens. Fostering greater involvement in civic life, the defeat of apathy and ignorance, and the strengthening of the community and family bonds that enable stability are challenges that we must all address. Within this context, the acculturation and language acquisition of immigrants enables newcomers to operate from a position of strength within the society, and enables them to protect themselves from exploitation. Likewise, the provision of naturalization opportunities and education to those who are eligible encourages immigrants to fulfill their obligation to this society to participate fully.

Finally, we must affirm the human dignity of the undocumented who live within our midst. Every effort should be made to ensure that their basic needs are met and that their human rights are not trampled upon. The Church remains in solidarity with these people in whose faces we see Christ. As in 1994, “We commit our Catholic agencies, Catholic Charities services, our educational, health care institutions to serve all our people who are in need of them.”<sup>21</sup>

## *Conclusion*

The United States is at a juncture in its history when the changes made in its laws and structure of governance will have an impact that will reach into the next century. It is important that as a nation we revisit our national strategies for handling important issues, since that process provides the opportunity to renew and revitalize our nation and our national self-perception. We have been concerned, however, that in so many arenas, including immigration, the debate has been neither thorough nor thoughtful. At a time when we should each be pondering how we can act in solidarity to help our nation and fellow residents meet the challenges of the millennium, the climate instead brings further fragmentation as those who have traditionally been at the edge of this society—the poor, minorities, and immigrants—face increasing marginalization. It is critical to remember that the tone and spirit of the

discussion should be positive if the outcome of the debate is to elevate it and this nation. To that end, we echo the words of the Holy Father:

At stake is the dignity of the human person, whose defense and promotion have been entrusted to us by the Creator, and to whom the men and women at every moment of history are strictly and responsibly in debt.<sup>22</sup>

## Notes

1. "Foreigners in Illegal Situation in Europe," Final document adopted by the participants at the meeting authorized by the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, Munich, Germany, September 29–October 1, 1994. *L'Osservatore Romano*, weekly English edition, February 22, 1995.
2. Solidarity has been defined as a social philosophy based on Catholic philosophical principles wherein "the individual is not a mere member of the whole or a mere means by which a state-designated goal is achieved, but he is a person for whom all the activities of all the members of society and the state are directed" (*New Catholic Encyclopedia* [New York: McGraw Hill, 1967], vol. 13, p. 419). Since the convocation of the Second Vatican Council, the definition of solidarity has shifted slightly from its natural foundations to emphasize foundations of a more theological and scriptural basis.  
The doctrine of subsidiarity dates back to the teachings of Thomas Aquinas. "The principle of subsidiarity is broadly concerned with the limits of the right and duty of the public authority to intervene in social and economic affairs" (*New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 13, p. 762). Subsidiarity recognizes a natural complementarity between the Church and the state. The Church is subsidiary to the state in political matters, while the state is subsidiary to the Church in spiritual and moral matters. Subsidiarity espouses the principle of decision-making and the collateral assumption of responsibility at the lowest possible level, simultaneously acknowledging that such delegation of authority does not abdicate from paramount responsibility those who are ultimately accountable.
3. Pius XII, Apostolic Constitution *Exsul Familia*. In *The Church's Magna Charta for Migrants*, Rev. Giulivo Tessarolo, PSSC, ed. (Staten Island: St. Charles Seminary), p. 23.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
5. Sacred Congregation for Bishops, *Instruction on the Pastoral Care of People Who Migrate* (Vatican City, August 22, 1969). The common good calls societies to put the welfare of the whole ahead of narrow individual interests. In this context, a nation's right to control its borders enables an orderly process for migration that protects both the migrants and the receiving society. The common good is a broader notion than that of the national interest, and thus engaging in a border enforcement that focuses simply on keeping people out and

ignores the interests of other players—the migrants themselves and sending countries—is ultimately unacceptable, since it is too narrowly defined.

6. John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 1981, §23.
7. John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, §39; as reprinted in *Origins* 17(38), March 3, 1988.
8. John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 1991, §51.
9. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Resolution on the Pastoral Concern of the Church for People on the Move," November 11, 1976. In *Pastoral Letters of the United States Catholic Bishops, vol. IV, 1975-1983* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1983), p. 169.
10. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Cultural Pluralism," April 14, 1980. In *Pastoral Letters of the United States Catholic Bishops, vol. IV, 1975-1983* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1983), pp. 366-367.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*, p. 367.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 369.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 370.
15. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Together a New People*, Pastoral Statement on Migrants and Refugees, November 8, 1986 (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1987), pp. 9-10.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
17. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, §4.
18. Nicholas DiMarzio and Demetrios G. Papademetriou, *U.S. Immigration Reform: Challenges and Choices for the Future* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference Migration and Refugee Services, May 1988), p. 32.
19. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Policy Statement on Employer Sanctions* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1988).
20. Julie Quiroz has recently published an interesting study of such activities, entitled *Together in Our Differences: How Newcomers and Established Residents are Rebuilding American Communities* (Washington, D.C.: National Immigration Forum, 1995).
21. Cardinal William Keeler, *Welcoming the Stranger: A Reflection on the Current Immigration Debate* (Washington, D.C.: National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1994), p. 3.
22. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, §47.

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